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ABSTRACT

There is need for clarification of what is being called "process writing," for, in many cases, children are inappropriately being trained to follow a professional writing model. A serious problem with the use of the writing process approach is that very little is actually known about the writing process. Writing is supremely complex and intensely personal, and is essentially a hidden process, studied only through observation of the writer in action, analysis of the verbalizations of the writer as he or she writes, analysis of the comments of the writer about the writing, and analysis of the written product. Professional opinions differ on whether process writing is a boon or a blight for education, and recently critics have begun to question the value of process writing. On the credit side, the process writing movement has redressed the imbalance in the focus on writing in schools as distinct from the previous focus on reading. However, research with sixth grade writers revealed that children need to be taught to write. The great flaw in process writing is that it places far too much emphasis on children writing and talking and not enough emphasis on teachers teaching children to write. The skills required to write well are many and varied and cannot be mastered by accident. (A table outlining skill areas where child writers require instruction is included and 22 references are attached.) (ARH)

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CAUTION : PROCESS WRITING IN PROGRESS!

ABSTRACT

There is need for clarification of what is being called "process writing" or a "process approach to teaching writing". In many cases, children are being trained to follow a professional writer model. It is argued that teachers must teach writing by helping children at all stages in the production of a written piece. The needs of child writers are revealed by allowing them to discuss their writing and how it came into being. Teachers of writing should base their teaching on the perceived needs of child writers.

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Paper delivered at the 33rd Annual Convention of the International Reading Association, Toronto, CANADA, 6th May 1988.

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CAUTION: PROCESS WRITING IN PROCESS !

Donald Graves remarked back in 1984 that "Writing process has spread like wildfire in North America, Australia and New Zealand. Implementation has been so rapid that teachers and school systems are experiencing some growing pains." (p. 4)

There is no doubt that the writing process movement has been one of the most exciting events to have occurred in schools in recent years. It is a delight to go into schools and to see children writing with enthusiasm and enjoyment. The writing period, once seen by many children as a dull grind in which they tried to produce what they thought teachers wanted, has become the most eagerly awaited period in the school day. Children complain if interruptions occur to their writing times. They have found a genuine motivation to write well, eager to "publish" for an audience which includes not only the teacher but also peers, parents and, in some cases, people outside the school. Given "ownership" of their writing, the children take their work seriously and are willing and anxious to "confer" with interested parties at various stages in the production of a piece.

However, Graves's reference to "growing pains" sounds a warning that all is not perfect. Some problems are being encountered. In the years since 1984, uneasiness about the process approach to teaching writing seems to have grown, to the extent that, in Australia, some criticism has been made which is quite hysterical. For example, Moore (1987) claims that "Process writing ... is almost at the stage of being out of control - like an advanced carcinoma." (p. 1) I doubt if many teachers or parents would be concerned to this extent. However, it is time to take a rational look at how writing is being taught in our schools and to make some guarded judgements on the situation.

In this paper I would like to suggest some possible reasons for some of the problems which have occurred in the process writing movement. Furthermore, I suggest that teachers could make better use of what we know about children's writing processes in deciding on how to teach children to compose better

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pieces. The focus needs to be put on the individual child engaged in the act of composing a written piece not on seeing children as fledgling professionals going through a sort of immature version of the processes followed by professional writers. Process writing has gone too far in allowing or encouraging children to do their own thing and has run away from the fact that writing is an enormously complex act which requires the mastery of a wide range of skills. The role of the teacher is, and always has been, to teach these skills.

It may be that one problem in the teaching of writing is that some teachers have been forced into using an approach which they have not been prepared for. Others may have adopted a "process approach" because such an approach has become "trendy" and those who use it may be seen as right up with the latest in education. My elementary student teachers have asked that "process writing" be included in their program. Principals of some of the schools which employ graduates of the program have specified that they want teachers who have "done process writing".

These references to "process writing" or to a "process approach to writing" as it is sometimes called, may be a simple manifestation of a deeper problem, a lack of understanding of what the "new" approach to teaching writing is intended to achieve.

The purists would point out that the word "process" is a transitive verb or a noun and not an adjective. Hence, its use as an adjective in the terms "process writing" or "process approach" is incorrect. This misuse is relatively unimportant. What is important is that some people who use the term may not have really thought about what is involved is such an approach. In simple terms, the focus has shifted from the finished product to the actual process of writing. By looking at what writers "do" as they write, by studying the process they go through and by providing help where needed during this process, we aim to help children become better writers.

The Collins English Dictionary defines the word "process" as "a series of actions directed to achieving a result or condition ... a method of producing or doing something". Hence, a writing process approach is one in which the teachers study the series of actions writers perform as they compose, and, more importantly, they provide assistance where required at all stages of the process.

Smith (1978) argues that it is vital that teachers understand the writing process. Such understanding is necessary for successful teaching:

> Without such understanding, teachers cannot make up their own minds about methods and materials, and are forced to fall back on the exhortations of experts or the importunings of publishers. Such teachers must work without knowing whether they succeed or fail. Without understanding, instruction is founded on superstition. (pp. 4 - 5)

This statement leads on to what I see as another, much greater problem relating to the use of the writing process approach. The problem is that we know very little about the writing process and I doubt if any of us could claim to understand it. Emig (1971) states that "writing is one of the most complex processes man engages in" (p. 44). Gardner (1975) describes writing as a "supremely complex and multi-faceted activity" (p. 119), and Braddock (1976) calls writing a "staggeringly complicated and varied process" (p. 18)

Furthermore, writing is an intensely personal process, peculiar to the individual and even to each writing act of the individual. It is this personal, peculiar quality of each person's writing processes that makes study of the writing process so difficult, even frustrating. However, we need to look closely at what individuals "do" as they write, if we are ever to begin to be able to make generalizations about the process. Squire (1975) warns that "unless we look more closely and carefully at the uniquely creative and personal nature of the processes of composing, we run the danger of stressing more and more in our programs the aspects of composition which matter less and less in terms of our pupils' ultimate growth." (p. 1)

What then should we do? We accept that writing is intensely complex and unique to the individual. We accept that an understanding of the process is vital if teachers are to teach writing well. Yet we also accept that we know little of the process. The temptation is to run away from the problem because of its size. Indeed, some attempts to describe the writing process are frightening in their complexity. For example, Boomer (1980) produced a very complex model of the composing process stating that one of his aims in doing so was to "complicate popular but simplistic conceptions of the composing process" (p. 18). Such an approach has its merits but it is not very helpful to the classroom teacher. Rather, some of the more basic descriptions, while

over-simplifying the process, can at least be translated into practice in the classroom.

For example, Beard (1984) claims that "the process of channelling spoken language competence into the production of writing can be seen as made up of three basic components: "'composing', 'transcribing' and 'reviewing'. Put even more simply they represent 'pre-writing', 'writing' and 're-writing'" (p. 24). Graves (1983) describes the process in terms of rehearsal, topic choice, selection of information, composing, reading, re-writing with voice "breathing through the entire process" (p. 229)

It can be argued, quite justly, that such descriptions of the writing process are simplistic. The staggeringly complex process of writing is being described in a few simple terms. However, a pragmatic attitude is needed. Busy classroom teachers will find little value in highly complicated explanations or theories of the writing process. They need attempts to describe the process which are comprehensible. They are willing to accept the short comings of simplistic explanations. The simple fact is that, in our present state of knowledge, simplistic explanations must suffice.

Stallard (1976) notes the persistent criticism of those who have tried to reduce the composition process to mechanical terms. However, he goes on to quote Bloomfield who justifies this on blandly pragmatic grounds:

> There is always something artificial about reducing a problem to simple mechanical terms, but the whole history of science shows that simple mechanical terms are the only terms in which our limited human capacity can solve a problem. The lesser variables have to wait until the main variables outline has been ascertained, and this is true even when these lesser variables are the very things that make our problem worth solving. (p. 181)

In encouraging teachers to use a process approach to teaching writing, we need to be honest about the fact that little is really known about the process. We must admit that we are over-simplifying the matter but we can justify doing so on the grounds that even an over-simplification of the process can and does lead to a better approach to teaching writing.

How then can teachers examine the writing processes of their pupils, and how can this examination lead to better writing?

It seems to me that our limited human capacity restricts the techniques which we can use to study the writing processes of children to the following:

1. Close observation of the writer in action.
2. Close analysis of the verbalizations of the writer in action. (Introspective comment)
3. Close analysis of the comments of the writer about the writing. (Retrospective comment)
4. Close analysis of the written product.

The great difficulty in studying the writing process is that it is essentially a hidden process. We can observe the physical activities of the writer and we can watch the graphic production of a piece, but the real action, the composing of the piece, is hidden inside the mind of the writer. It is only by tapping into the consciousness of the writer that we can gain any access to this hidden process. In simple terms, we can only find out about this hidden activity from what the writer can and will tell us.

I have made many hours of videotape recordings of writers in action. In some respects, these provide fascinating viewing. One can see the intense concentration of the writer, the impatient gestures when difficulties arise, the almost frantic re-reading to try to spring onto the next phases of the composition, the look of utter hopelessness when the thread of a piece is lost, the look of triumph when at last all falls into place, and the sigh of relief when at last the piece is finished. Classroom teachers would be familiar with these overt aspects of the process and, perhaps is some very limited way, these aspects tell us something of how writers proceed. However, observation of the writer, even with the most precise photographic aids, tell us nothing of the hidden process.

The introspective comment of the writer is that comment made during the production of a piece. It is comment intended not for anyone else but rather the writer's "talking to oneself". Unfortunately, for the student of the process, most of this comment is inaudible. Even if it were audible, it would probably be incomprehensible. As we write do we really talk to ourselves in sentences which would make any sense to others? Furthermore, in schools we have certainly not encouraged children to verbalize as they write.

However, one tool, admittedly a crude one, for studying the writing process is to encourage children to compose aloud and to examine what they say. Emig

(1971) in her study of their composing processes of twelfth graders, encouraged the writers to "compose aloud". I used a similar approach in my study of grade six writers, although I did not use the term "composing aloud". Rather, I encouraged the children to talk to themselves as they wrote and I used highly sensitive microphones to pick up what they said.

Predictably, different writers responded in different ways. Some children talked quite a lot, seemingly unconcerned at this unusual freedom to talk as they wrote. Others quite obviously tried hard to give me what they thought I wanted, said a few things and then lapsed into silence as they became engrossed in their writing. However, on studying what composing aloud did occur, I felt that I learned a lot about how writers write. Composing aloud is a crude tool but one worthy of consideration in a process approach. There may be value in allowing children to talk to themselves, as well as to others, during the writing of a piece. Composing aloud may help to clarify an idea or to see how an expression "sounds". It may also help the observer to gain some insight into what the writer is doing. With those children who opt to compose aloud, we may find in their vocalizations some useful clues about the writing. Composing aloud may have only limited value, but in our attempts to understand the writing process, we need to use any technique we can.

I have found that children respond enthusiastically to the invitation to talk about what they have written. From the request to "tell me about your story" emerges the sort of information which gives the best picture of how the story came into being. Conferencing is a vital element in the writing process approach. This is where teaching-learning of writing occurs. The writer re-acts to an interested audience and in doing so may clarify some point in the story. A suggestion by the audience may result in an improvement in the writing. At the same time, information as to how the writer has composed the piece can be gained.

Sometimes, interviews with young writers can be quite long. I have gathered many hours of audiotaped retrospective comment by young writers. From these tapes, I have detected facets of the composing process which concern them. They talk about facets of the process involved in deciding what to write about, how to write about it, and how the writing emerges. It is in conference with young writers that teachers can become aware of elements of the overall composing process which concern young writers as they produce a piece.

Children will talk about the sources of their ideas - things they have done, read about, seen on television, or even imagined. Some facets of the process they go through in converting material from their "storehouse of knowledge" into written prose can be discerned in their retrospective comment.

Problems associated with getting started, keeping a piece moving, finding the right words to say what they want to say and getting a good ending will be talked about. Perhaps, mechanical difficulties associated with spelling, grammar or punctuation may be mentioned. In talking about these things, the writer is revealing aspects of the overall writing process.

In retrospective comment, the writer focusses on what the writing is like. In conference with an interested audience, the writer judges the degree of success which the writing has achieved. This evaluation of the writing is an important part of the overall composing process. The writer reviews and revises what has been done.

Retrospective comment, discussion of the written product and how it came into being, by the writer can tell us much more about the writing process than does an analysis of the written product without the author being present. Yet, in the past, teachers have collected children's work, "corrected" it, written comments about it and handed it back. In doing so, they have believed that they have helped the writer. Such help must surely be minimal. It is given far from the point of need. It is based on an assumption that the audience knows what the writer intended. It is received after the event and, if read at all by the writer, is unlikely to have any real effect on subsequent writing process. Of course, the written product is the most important thing in writing. The greatest of literary intentions have no lasting value unless they are realised in a form comprehensible to an audience. However, if we are seriously concerned with writing process, we need to focus on all parts of the process - what happens before, during and after a piece is written.

The writing process approach to the teaching of writing involves utilising all the resources available to us to try to understand what a writer "does". It involves closely observing the writer at work, listening to and responding to needs revealed in the writer's comments both during and after the writing, and re-acting to and discussing the written product. Young writers face the

same types of difficulties as adult writers, even professional writers. They need to search their storehouse of experiences for ideas, and to work over these ideas. Then they need to get started and to face all the production problems involved in expressing a composition in written form. They need to be aware of an audience for the writing and to revise and polish to a degree acceptable to that audience. To solve all of the problems facing them, the writers use a process, a means of getting things done. The teacher of writing facilitates this process.

"Growing pains" in the writing process approach are inevitable. The change in emphasis which the approach involves must cause problems. However, at least some of these problems may be avoided if we are careful to remember what the thing is all about. The aim is to produce better writers by gaining insight into how they write and providing help when and where it is needed. Most of the complex process of composing a written piece is hidden from the observer. However, by tapping into the consciousness of the writer, we can become aware of at least some facets of how writing evolves, and we can assist in the production of a piece.

Newsome (1973) emphasises the loneliness of the writer, a feeling we can all identify with:

> Pretty well of necessity he sits alone. Book or paper in front of him, an implement to work with. But the rest of the world's apparatus - all its entries and exits, confrontations and demands- sink into remoteness. The stage on which he acts is one on which no one watches him acting. Only indirectly is he aware of people - as potential auditors of the slow accumulation of the voice he hears inside him. For the present, life proceeds line by line. (p. 10)

The writing process approach cannot remove the loneliness of the writer. A written piece is an intensely personal thing, the product of a unique personality, fashioned in a unique way. The teacher should not intrude on the writer at work. However, the teacher can be there when needed. The writer must proceed alone if he or she is to produce an original piece. However, the writer is not abandoned. Help is near at hand. This is what I think the process approach to teaching writing is all about ! However, I am not sure that this is what everyone who uses the term "process writing" is talking about. Herein, lies another problem.

The process approach to the teaching of writing has become very popular in Australia, North America and New Zealand. It is interesting to note that it

does not seem to have taken off in England. We can only speculate on reasons for this but it would be interesting to pursue the question at some time.

There have been some interesting developments in the use of a process approach in Australia. For example, the term "process writing" has come into common use.

The origin of the term "process writing" is hard to trace. Perhaps, like Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin, it just growed! However, it has probably emerged from the terms used in the literature of the late 1970's and early 1980's which dealt with approaches to the teaching of writing which aimed to help writers at all stages in the process of producing a written piece.

Walshe (1981) described a teaching-of-literacy research program being conducted in 27 grades in the St. George Region of the N.S.W. Department of Education as being based on "what is popularly termed the 'conference approach'". (p. 121) However, in the following year in another publication, Turbill referred to the "new process conference approach" (Turbill, 1983, p. 10). In the same year, Hill's account of her work with Preparatory grade writers in a Melbourne suburban school was published under the title of The Writing Process (Hill, 1983). In 1984, a book by Rowe and Lomas appeared under the title of A Writing Curriculum: Process and Conference (Rowe and Lomas, 1984).

Meanwhile, in articles in subject journals, terms such as "process approach to writing" and "writing process" began to appear. Graves (1984) summed up the remarkable interest in the area when he wrote that "Writing process has spread like wild fire in North America, Australia and New Zealand" (p. 4)

However, I cannot locate who is responsible for the term "process writing". This is a pity since I would love to ask that person what the term meant to him or her!

One problem with popular terms such as "process writing" is that they come to mean different things to different people. Wilson (1986) pointed out that "the term process writing is being used to describe two very different aspects of the writing curriculum. One is the process of language acquisition, more specifically, early writing acquisition; the other is the process, or steps, which many authors follow when writing to publish." (p. 91) I would suspect

that we would get a wide range of answers from different people to the question "What is process writing?"

My hunch is that most teachers "doing process writing" would be operating on some version of the conference approach popularized by the Primary English Teaching Association and summarized in Turbill (1983, pp. 283). A more modern version is that of Pearce (1987) which is set out on a number of classroom charts.

The essential ingredients of process writing as summarized by Turbill and Pearce, would seem to be:

Children having control or ownership of the writing. They select the topics for writing and decide on how to proceed;

Children being free to draft and re-draft pieces, editing and polishing the drafts;

Children conferring with teacher and peers on various elements of the drafts;

Children publishing their pieces in some way.

The teacher's role appears to be to provide adequate curriculum time for writing, to confer with the writers where required, to write with the children, and to provide an audience for the writing. Above all, her role is to provide an environment in which children can be encouraged to write freely.

The mysterious origin of the term "process writing" and the confusion over what it actually means are probably less important matters than that of whether process writing has brought any great benefit to education.

In simple terms, is process writing a boon or a blight on the educational scene?

Opinions are somewhat divided on this question. Walshe (1982) described process writing as a "transformation", "an upsurge", "a resurgence", "a renaissance", and "nothing less than a revolution" (p. 3). However, more recently, critics have begun to question the value of process writing. Wilson (1986) warns of the danger of an unbalanced writing curriculum in classrooms where writing for publication occupies the total time devoted to writing. She objects both to the indiscriminate use of the term "process writing" and also

to children writing for publication to the exclusion of other types of writing.

Barcan (1987) attacks process writing in schools as a "new hazard". He argues that process writing is "the latest in a series of pedagogical fashions which have troubled Australian education over the last two decades". He describes process writing as "a new gimmick" which uses "pretentious language to describe common sense procedures". It is, he claims, "a variant of neo-progressive education". While admitting that the original scheme was "not without some merits", he warns that "when an educational technique is popularized, applied in a mass scale, it often becomes vulgarized. The original scheme of process writing ... has become distorted, dogmatic and simplified". (p. 28)

Donsky (1984) is critical of the "ado" over process and product claiming that the whole thing is a "chimera of the 80's".

> Much ado has been made of "process" versus "product" in recent years, yet the controversy appears more of a chimera of the 1980's a period enamoured of electro-magnetic transfers of energy. For in truth, good teachers have always been interested in process, that is, in the growth of the writer/reader - speaker/listener, otherwise known as student; they attended to the product in so far as it provided a measure of anticipated growth.
>
> [p. 801]

Donsky goes on to argue that much of what has been hailed as "new" in process writing has in fact always existed in classrooms where teachers have been concerned in helping their pupils at all stages in the process of producing a written piece.

Who then is right? Is process writing a revolution which is re-shaping the educational scene, or is it a chimera? Is it a new orthodoxy revered by its worshippers as the panacea for illiteracy, or, is it merely reflection of a permissive society?

A good deal of the writing to which I have referred is heady stuff; some is almost hysterical! However, there is, I think, a certain amount of truth in what all are saying.

On the credit side, the process writing movement has redressed the imbalance in the focus on writing in schools as distinct from that on reading which

existed into the 1980's. There is no doubt also that children's attitudes to writing are much more positive now than previously where writing was seen as a chore and, unfortunately, used too often as a means of punishment.

On the debit side, it must be admitted that there is confusion about what process writing is. There is a lack of clear definition of the objectives which it aims to achieve. Also there is some serious question as to whether it really is anything new.

I do not intend to pursue the suggestion by Barcan that process writing is a reflection of a permissive society or part of a neo-progressivist plot to undermine standards. Nor will I take further Donsky's claim that process writing is a phenomenon produced by a society obsessed by computer technology and jargon. However, I do think we should take seriously the point that good teachers have traditionally used the techniques inherent in a process approach. Donsky's review of writing textbooks used in parts of the U.S.A. suggests that process writing is really nothing new. She points out that:

> Concepts regarding the symbiotic relationship between reading and writing, the possibility of teaching reading through writing, and the importance of revising begin not with Graves (1983) but with Baker and Thorndike (1912) ... Writing as a process, one involving pre-writing activities ... was central to the textbook series of Burleson (et al, 1952) which included caveats to the effect that writing was an ongoing process, one that might necessitate a given piece being completed over a period of weeks. (801)

Donsky goes on to point out that peer teaching and group conferencing were promoted by Pearson and Kirchwey (1921) while "social revision", children discussing their work with other children, was the norm for all texts published in the 1930's.

So it would seem that process writing is nothing new. However, there is one important element which may be lacking in the process writing approach but which was probably present in the old days. This element is, simply, teachers teaching children the basic skills involved in writing. It is fair to ask whether, in the process approach, children are being taught to write, or whether they are floundering along perhaps picking up a few skills almost by accident. The process approach encourages children to write, to draft, redraft, polish, edit and publish. Teachers are urged to write with the children, to confer with them to facilitate their growth. However, where do they teach? When we examine Turbill's (1982) twelve steps on "How Writers

Improve Their Writing", we see in steps 7 and 10 that the teacher will ask questions. However, there is no mention of the teacher teaching. Again, in Pearce's charts, there is no mention of teaching. Only once, in step 8 "Conferencing", does the teacher even appear.

We are constantly told how complex and difficult is the writing process. I have already referred to comments of people such as Emig (1971) and Gardner (1975). More recently, Hillocks (1987) pointed out that writing is "an enormously complex task demanding the use of at least four types of knowledge: Knowledge of the content to be written about; procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content; knowledge of discourse structures, including the schemata underlying various types of writing ... syntactic forms, and the conventions of punctuation and usage, and the procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type." (p. 261)

My own research with a small number of grade 6 able writers revealed to me how complex the writing processes of young children are and how varied are the concerns of young writers. The research indicated to me very clearly that children need to be taught to write. Even the best of child writers have numerous needs. The skills required to write well are many and varied and cannot be mastered by accident. Many skills will be picked up by children as they read and write but many others must be taught and taught well. The great flaw in process writing is, I believe, that it places far too much emphasis on children writing and talking - drafting, editing, conferencing, publishing. However, there is not enough emphasis on teachers teaching children to write.

The professional writer model which seems to underlie the process approach is, in many aspects, not an appropriate one for child writers. The professional writer becomes aware of a problem or experience about which he decides to write. He discusses, researches, and drafts a piece. He re-drafts perhaps several times. He submits his work to a publisher whose reader revises and suggests changes. The author again revises, recasts, polishes. The piece is published. Readers respond to the published piece.

The professional writer model is not directly applicable to child writers because of the very simple fact that the professional writer has mastered the basic skills. These are the basic skills which all of us spend a lifetime trying to master. Is it logical to expect that these skills are possessed by

young children? Young children are learner writers who need to be taught the basic skills. To teach these skills is the task of the class teacher.

The range of skills involved in writing is very large. From what I have learned of the needs of young writers, I have arranged some of these skills under the headings of What to Write?, How to Write It?, and What Is It Like?. These "facets of composing" derived from the comments of a small number of able child writers provide some idea of the range of skill areas where children need to be taught. The following is a list of facets of composing referred to by grade 6 able writers.

FACETS OF COMPOSING A STORY REFERRED TO BY GRADE SIX ABLE WRITERS IN SEVEN STORY WRITING TASKS

1.0 WHAT TO WRITE?

1.1 Ideas
1.11 Responding to stimulus
1.12 Searching for an idea
1.13 Selecting an idea
1.14 Rejecting an idea
1.15 Incubating an idea

1.2 Sources
1.21 Literature
1.22 Experience
1.23 General Knowledge
1.24 Television/Movies
1.25 Other

2.0 HOW TO WRITE IT?

2.1 Beginning
2.11 Planning
2.12 Starting

2.2 Developing
2.21 Point of view
2.22 Lexical choices
2.23 Stylistic choices
2.24 Searching for details
2.25 Selecting details
2.26 Production strategies

2.3 Finishing
2.31 Shortening
2.32 Ending

2.4 Components
2.41 Theme/Moral
2.42 Setting
2.43 Mood
2.44 Climax
2.45 Title
2.46 Characterization
2.47 Naming
2.48 Illustrating
2.49 Humour

2.5 Concerns
2.51 Production problems
2.52 Spelling
2.53 Handwriting
2.54 Omitting words
2.55 Ambiguity
2.56 Paragraphing
2.57 Punctuation/Capitalisation
2.58 Grammar

3.0 WHAT IS IT LIKE?

3.1 Evaluating
3.11 Re-reading
3.12 Revising
3.13 Judging the part
3.14 Judging the whole

3.2 Discussing
3.21 Commenting on content

3.3 Reading
3.31 Sense of audience

(Nolan, 1979)

The facets listed above provide ideas of the skill areas where child writers require instruction. Some are more complex and difficult than others. Some are more important than others. However, all are skill areas involved in composing written pieces.

The value of conferencing with child writers lies not so much in its capacity to help the writers to proceed to develop the pieces in progress, as with its capacity to reveal the needs of the writers. The needs thus revealed provide the writing curriculum. Similarly, the reading of the finished product will indicate the areas where the immature writer can be helped to develop the basic skills.

The process writing movement has been an interesting, even exciting phenomenon. It has brought many benefits not the least of which is the enthusiastic attitude to writing of young children who have been encouraged to write freely. However, the process writing movement has had undesirable effects such as those to be seen in classrooms where children can be seen toying with the same disappointing piece day after day, uninspired and unassisted by a teacher who believes that to intervene is to hamper creativity.

The process approach has made more clear than ever before that children have needs as writers. The role of the teacher is to satisfy these needs.

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